



Town of Berwyn Heights

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MAYOR
Amanda M. Dewey

COUNCIL MEMBERS
Jodie A. Kulpa-Eddy (Mayor Pro Tem)
Christopher S. Brittan Powell
Jason W. Papanikolas
Ethan D. Sweep

Worksession Minutes May 3, 2021 | 7:00 pm

This meeting was held by videoconference due to the ongoing COVID-19 health emergency. The meeting was broadcast on Berwyn Heights cable TV channels and streamed on the Town website. Residents were given the opportunity to join the meeting via Zoom and comment by telephone and email.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Amanda Dewey, Mayor Pro Tempore (MPT) Jodie Kulpa-Eddy, Councilmembers (CMs) Christopher Brittan-Powell, Jason Papanikolas and Ethan Sweep. Also present were Town Manager (TM) Laura Allen, Town Clerk Kerstin Harper, BHEAC Co-Chair Allison Holmes, Anacostia Trails Heritage Area (ATHA) Director Meagan Baco and former ATHA Director Aaron Marcavitch.

1. Announcements

Mayor Dewey announced that Berwyn Heights offers rides on a shuttle to the Greenbelt Metro Station vaccination site this coming Friday and Monday. Interested residents can contact the Town office. MPT Kulpa-Eddy announced that resident Howard Johnson will celebrate his 100th birthday on May 9.

CM Brittan Powell said he receives inquiries from residents about the reopening of Town facilities and lifting of Covid-19 restrictions. He asked if the Town is making plans for reopening. Mayor Dewey replied that the Town has followed Prince George's County in imposing and lifting Covid-related restrictions. The County in turn follows the Governor's actions. The County still has restrictions on gatherings and indoor dining but has lifted the outdoor mask mandate for vaccinated people if they are not in a crowd.

In Berwyn Heights, the Town's emergency manager TM Allen makes decisions on lifting restrictions in consultation with Chief Antolik. Next week, she will meet with the Senior's Club about the reopening of the Senior Center. Resumption of community activities such as litter cleanups should be discussed with the Town manager, who may decide whether to permit an activity on a case- by-case basis.

TM Allen said she has begun the reopening process in conformance with CDC and OSHA guidance. A hazard assessment has been completed with each department. Next, the Town office may reopen by appointment only and drop-ins on some days. She is waiting to hear from the County as to reopening of Senior Centers, but preparations are being made to get the facility ready.

2. Approval of the Agenda

On a motion by CM Brittan-Powell and second by CM Papanikolas, the agenda was approved 5 to 0.

3. Discussion Items

Anacostia Trail's Heritage Area (ATHA) presentation: Mayor Dewey welcomed the newly elected and former ATHA directors Meagan Baco and Aaron Marcavitch. Mr. Marcavitch began with a brief overview of the organization. He said ATHA is a tourism program that promotes history, culture, and nature in this region. ATHA has a grant program from which Berwyn Heights has benefitted in the past and should consider in the future if it undertakes projects related to history, arts or trails. ATHA also offers technical assistance for such projects.

Mr. Marcavitch said ATHA's directors visit member municipalities once a year in the spring to report on what the organization has accomplished and to answer any questions. This year, ATHA worked hard on the County's Civil Rights Trail, the Battle of Bladensburg master planning process, trail tourism initiatives and hiring a new executive director. The new Director, Meagan Baco, has worked in preservation in Maryland for many years, focused on digital marketing, communications, and advocacy. In particular, she has been involved with the restoration of the Greenbelt theater and the preservation of the Glenn Dale Hospital.

Director Baco said that she plans to follow in the footsteps of Mr. Marcavitch and provide the same level of service. She can be contacted using the same phone number and general email with questions about grants and partnerships on any heritage-related issues. Director Baco said Mr. Marcavitch has done outstanding work as ATHA's executive director and thanked him for his 10 years of service.

Mayor Dewey said the Town recently stood up a task force that produced a report with recommendations on improving walkability and bikeability in Town. They may soon connect with ATHA to seek advice and funding. Director Baco said she would be happy to talk with the task force members and asked to send her the report.

Event policy: Mayor Dewey said the Council had several discussions about event planning in connection with the Covid-19 pandemic that hadn't been considered before. TM Allen has drafted an event policy pertaining to both private and public events with consideration given to exceptional circumstances, such as a pandemic.

TM Allen gave a synopsis of the event policy. She said this version, as opposed to the one presented in December 2020, includes a policy for events hosted by Town organizations. It designates staff authorized to make the decision on whether an event can be held, adds a process for keeping people safe, and a process for holding block parties. The revised policy incorporates another municipality's event policy that has been updated to address the circumstances of the pandemic, as well as guidance from the Town's liability insurance carrier, LGIT.

TM Allen said Section 5 and 6 deal specifically with Town organizations, and enable the Council to:

- Designate recurring events hosted by Town organizations as taking priority over other events.
- Exempt Town organization events from permit requirements.
- Require Town organizations to comply with LGIT's event manual and risk control check list.
- Require Town organizations to submit an event plan 2 months prior to the event.

In addition, Section 9 of the revised policy authorizes the Town Manager to cancel or modify an event for reasons of public health, safety or welfare and includes an appeal process whereby any person or organization can appeal a decision about the cancellation, denial of a permit and other event-related matter to the Town Council. A process for block parties was not included, as they don't appear to occur very often and may be handled as a community event or Town organization hosted event.

In discussion, councilmembers raised the following concerns:

- Are permits required for certain block parties? Definition needed of private vs. public property.
- Are permits required for business celebrations (e.g. Grand Opening)?
- Complicated 10-page event planning form may deter Town organizations' volunteers from holding events.
- Recreation Council should have the opportunity to give feedback on the event plan process.
- Non-refundable deposit requirement might be waived for Town organizations.
- Are animal adoptions prohibited under section 7 (e) - Sale of Animals?
- Is a license required for serving of alcohol at events under Section II - Permits (3) (b)?
- Scheduling to hear appeals may be difficult with Town Council meeting only once a month.
- Requiring an event plan submission 2 months prior to an event may deter holding of some events.

TM Allen responded that the pandemic has raised new questions and required more planning ahead than is usual. But, in general, it is a good idea for the Town to have a written document stating who is planning what type of event to avoid misunderstandings. Town staff stands ready to assist Town organizations with filling out the event form, which should become easier after the first time. She also suggested adopting an annual events calendar for recurring events to facilitate the planning process. TM Allen will revise and clarify the policy with respect to deposits, animal adoption events, and timing of event registration and appeals process for the next review by the Town Council.

Education Advisory Committee – scholarship program: Education Advisory Committee (BHEAC) Co-Chair Allison Holmes presented the BHEAC's summer scholarship program proposal. She said the BHEAC is proposing to use \$300 of its budget to fund 3 scholarships for the Berwyn Heights Community Center's STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts & Mathematics) summer camp program. The camp for ages 6-12 will run from June 28 – July 30 and offers activities to stimulate participants' intellectual and creative sides by building simple machines and exploring science and art. Interested families that have a financial need are requested to fill out a simple application form, published in the May Bulletin and on the Town website.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy suggested that participants of the program be given the option to describe their experience at the August Town meeting or submit a written report anonymously. There were no objections. Mayor Dewey noted that the Council is requested to consider funding 5 additional scholarships if seats are available for this program. Council expressed support for appropriating \$500, from the Council's education line item. After some discussion, Council agreed not to fund additional summer camp scholarships as the STEAM camp at the Community Center already has a waitlist and there is not enough time to complete an application process for alternative programs.

Education Advisory Committee – education grant process: Mayor Dewey explained that the Council heretofore has awarded education grants on a first-come, first-served basis. Per request by the Council, the BHEAC has developed a formal grant process to award grants in a more thoughtful, accessible, and transparent manner.

Ms. Holmes explained that the BHEAC has designed a grant process that would publish requests for proposals twice a year in July and December. Education is broadly defined to encourage innovative proposals and be as inclusive as possible. Any organization that serves the community is eligible, with priority going to 501 (c) (3) organizations, such as PTAs/ PTOs and teachers serving Berwyn Heights. Awards would range between \$250 - \$2500 at the discretion of the Town Council. The application

would require the applicant to provide detailed information about the proposal, including its purpose, connection to Berwyn Heights, partnerships, and beneficiaries, as well as a budget justification and measures of success.

Ms. Holmes said proposals would first be submitted to the BHEAC for review and scoring. Once all proposals are received and scored, the BHEAC would present them to the Town Council with recommendations. The Council would make the final selection and determine funding levels. Then notifications of grant awards would be sent to the applicants, the entire process taking about 2 months. Finally, funding recipients would be asked to submit documentation on their project as well as a presentation or report of outcomes. The project report would be an opportunity for students to engage with the Town Council and support justification for the grant program.

In discussion, the following points were made:

- Many PTAs are currently not functioning because they are required to elect their representatives in-person every two years.
- Parkdale High School's PTA appears to have dissolved, and the Town needs to identify a good contact.
- A webpage might be created to post the grant documents.
- The grant application season should be publicized as soon as possible, before the end of the school year.

TM Allen said staff will look into posting the grant proposal documents on a webpage. Further, the Town Manager's Assistant Yvonne Odoi will be the intake person for grant proposals, but she will not be in a position to answer any qualitative questions. Any questions about the grant details will be forwarded to the BHEAC. Grant questions should be submitted in writing and could be posted with answers to the Town website. Mayor Dewey thanked the BHEAC for developing a grant process that will help make the grant award process more rational.

Department Reports

Mayor Dewey thanked everyone who participated in the Berwyn Heights Day parade. She announced an upcoming NW/EP meeting, a free shuttle to the Greenbelt Metro Station vaccine site on May 7 and 10, and walk-in availability at many vaccination sites. Further, Mayor Dewey attended an American Rescue Plan information session hosted by the MML, and this topic is going to be on the Town Council's agenda in the near future; the Town's FY 2022 budget is up for adoption at the May 12 Town meeting, and everyone is encouraged to comment.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy reported that she attended the Prince George's County state of the economy virtual address, at which County Executive Alsbrooks was the keynote speaker. Her administration is focusing on creating a healthy County, which prioritizes access to food, healthcare and education. Councilmembers attended an April 22 Four Cities Meeting hosted virtually by Greenbelt, at which the Maglev project, Beltway widening, Purple Line and the Greenbelt Road corridor were discussed. CM Sweep gave a presentation on the progress made by the Greenbelt Road working group.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy announced that the County re-opened a cultural arts survey initially released in December 2020 in the hope that more residents will provide feedback. The survey has been extended to June 25 and can be accessed at <http://www.mncppc.org/4860/Cultural-Arts-Study>. The Council will take up its comment letter on the Maglev Draft Environmental Impact Statement at the May 12 Town meeting. Residents can also comment individually until May 24.

The Recreation Council will meet on May 4 and NW/EP on May 5. Residents can still complete the Berwyn Heights Day scavenger hunt that was published in the Bulletin and email it to [Susan Jones](#) or drop it off at the Town office for a prize. Residents can also check out the Berwyn Heights Day mystery jigsaw puzzles published in the electronic newsletter.

CM Papanikolas reported that TM Allen and Treasurer Lightfield have set up an electronic bill pay system which should make this process much more efficient.

CM Brittan-Powell reported the Code Department is working with the County and residents to manage new construction on recently subdivided lots and is doing a good job.

CM Sweep said the street sweeper is in Town this week and asked residents to park off the street if possible. He reminded everyone to drive slowly as many pedestrians are out walking.

4. Resident and Community Comments

Councilmembers talked about the emergence of the 17-year cicadas. They reminded residents they can protect young trees by enclosing them in fine netting. TM Allen said she asked Pepco to postpone tree planting until fall. Residents may also want to hold off on planting trees.

On a motion by CM Sweep and second by MPT Kulpa-Eddy, the meeting was adjourned at 8:44 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper*, Town Clerk